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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FROM

Ambassador Helsinki

TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF

Buldes No. 172, September 19 and No. 198, September 29, 1958

October 3, 1958

DATE

17	ACTION	DEPT.
For Dept.	AUR-5	Rm R-2 IRC-8 4/10, 4/10, E7 W-1 W/mcc-3 ICA-10 sp-1
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	10-9	Co-12 USIA-10 OCB-1 OSD-4 Army & Navy-3 Air-1

SUBJECT: Additional Comments on Fennos-Soviet Relations

Aq-8 Com-10 TR-3

Private speculation over the possible impact on the Fagerholm Government of Soviet displeasure with its composition, which reached a climax around the middle of September, emerged as open—but not entirely frank—discussion in the Finnish press during the last few days of the month.

Developments which forced the question of the Soviet attitude into the open were perhaps mainly the appearance in the foreign press of articles viewing with alarm the recent signs of Soviet disapproval. These reportedly included two items in the British press, one in "Leue Zürcher Zeitung" and finally on September 24 an AP despatch by Tom Reedy, Stockholm. These articles contained nothing new in the way of facts, but the re-appearance of some, particularly the one from Zürich in the Helsinki press of September 24, represented almost the equivalent of psychological pressure on supporters of the present Finnish Government.

More or less concurrently, the Finnish Communists and the Soviet press were supplying regular reminders that the big brother was watching. An Izvestia article appearing September 19, for example, ostensibly celebrated the twin anniversaries of the 1944 Armistice and the 1955 signature of the 20-year extension of the 1948 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Finland and the USSR. Actually, it repeated some criticism from the initial Soviet blast against the "reactionary" color of the Fagerholm Cabinet and generally carried a tone which seemed designed to discourage any Finnish experimentation in relations with the Soviet Union. On September 20 independent "Helsingin Sanomat" picked up and reprinted as evidence of how far the Communists would go to overthrow the Fagerholm Government, this statement from "Kansan Uutiset":

"We have already in the past in several connections drawn attention also to that obstructionism which Cabinet circles—those of the present as well as the previous one—have exercised and still practice against the application of the general economic agreements made in Moscow last summer, which are most important to our country. If the Government were in favor of developing good-neighborly relations other than on paper and in the ceremonial speeches of its ministers, these matters would have long since gone beyond the committee stage and preliminary negotiations. No one can doubt the Government's ability to "get cracking" when it is noted how swiftly it succeeded in sending Bank Director Waris on his fund-raising trip overseas."

GCH/lliker/mx
REPORTER

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To this "Helsingin Sanomat" briefly commented, "When one recalls that the Otanmäki delegation was not welcomed to Moscow and that the Saimaa Canal negotiations there were interrupted, it is not the fault of Finland that matters have not progressed."

As if in answer, the Soviet "Literary Gazette" revived, according to a reprint appearing in the Finnish press on September 24, the charges of some months ago that the Finnish publishing industry is hostile to the Soviet Union, adding a new emphasis based on the generally western origin of Finland's anti-Soviet news stories. An excerpt (translated from "Maakansa") dealing more directly with Fenno-Soviet relations is enclosed (Enclosure No. 1).

A new phase in the handling of the problem by the pro-Government press seems to have opened with the appearance on September 26 of a highly editorialized news story in "Sosialidemokraatti", blaming the press discussion of a cooler Soviet attitude on a circular issued on September 18 by the SD Opposition in Finland. This was the basis for the article written by the "Stockholm AP correspondent" which came full circle, according to "Sosialidemokraatti", when it was reprinted on September 25 by the SD Opposition paper, "Päivän Sanomat".

Whatever the real explanation may be, the pro-Government press has adopted the public position that there is no basis for questioning Soviet friendliness toward Finland and that those who do are merely seeking partisan advantage. Conservative "Uusi Suomi" on September 29, for example, took the Finnish Communists to task for the resolution adopted the previous day by the SKP Central Committee in which it was claimed that the present Cabinet endangered favorable development of Fenno-Soviet relations. The editorial cited the program of the Fagerholm Government containing the standard litany of Finnish post-war foreign policy, and quoted Khrushchev during Kekkonen's visit to Moscow last May, to the effect that that policy had become the common property of all the Finnish people. "Helsingin Sanomat" on September 30 pushed the same line a step further, feigning incredulity that anyone should suggest that the Soviets might think of interfering in Finland's internal affairs and urging that the Government should issue a public statement clarifying the status of Fenno-Soviet relations.

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Agrarian "Maakansa", ostensibly a pro-Government paper but actually more often than not opposed to the present Government's efforts, broke silence on this subject on October 2. Its main discussion was in a column signed by "Kessu-Pekka", understood to be the pen name for Editor-in-Chief Sorvali. Most of the column was inconsequential quibbling, but it concluded with the admission that "there are certain reasons for anxiety" and stated that press discussion of the affair could do more harm than good. An excerpt is enclosed (Enclosure No. 2).

In its main editorial the same day, "Maakansa" gave more specific reasons for its concern in a discussion of Fenno-Soviet trade relations. Claiming that Finland's ruble balance is not yet serious, but may become so, the editorial said that exports to the Soviet Union inevitably will fall if imports from the Soviet Union are not increased. "It is high time that our industry, both that exporting to the USSR and that importing from there, should consider this cold fact and start from that base to build our trade with the Soviet Union next year." Before the beginning of 5-year trade negotiations early in 1959, it concluded, Finnish business should study the example of Sweden and other western countries, which have a growing interest in the Soviet market.



For the Ambassador:

Grant G. Hilliker
Grant G. Hilliker
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Excerpt from article in "Maakansa", September 24, 1958 (translation).
2. Excerpt from Column by "Kessu-Pekka" which appeared in "Maakansa" on October 2, 1958 (translation).
3. Memo of Conversation with Petäjäniemi, Editor-in-Chief of "Uusi Suomi", on September 29, 1958.
4. Memo of Conversation with Pitsinki, SD Party Secretary, on September 30, 1958.
5. Memo of Conversation with Orkomies, Finnish Foreign Ministry, September 23, 1958.
6. Memo of Conversation with Vanamo, Finnish Foreign Ministry, September 27, 1958.

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"Maakansa"
October 2, 1958
(Excerpt)

Column by "Kessu-Pekka"

* * * *

We do not quite realize in which sense "Uusi Suomi" has written the editorial. The paper itself has said that the foreign papers have made a big fuss over nothing. Why, then, should "Uusi Suomi" do the same? We wonder whether "Uusi Suomi" is trying to tell our neighbor what sort of an attitude it should take towards us also under the present circumstances?

One must not imagine that we could start giving advice to our neighbor.

To give advice in affairs like this often results in greater harm than good.

Soviet leaders have from time to time stated that it is for Finland to decide how it will arrange its affairs, what sort of policy it will pursue, and who will carry it out. But the Soviet Union for its part considers itself justified in deciding on the course of its own policy.

Accordingly, the big boys of our neighbor will hardly take advice from the columns of our papers, even though they keep a sharp eye on the kinds of opinions expressed in our press.

It seems to us that at the moment it is not very wise to start writing and talking about the problems of our foreign policy.

This does not, of course, mean that we ought to hide our head in a bush.

Nobody can remain indifferent to the development of our relations with the Soviet Union. Least of all the Cabinet ministers. And the party leaders. The question concerns the interests of the whole country.

One cannot deny that at the moment there are certain reasons for anxiety. There has been some friction. But we must hope that this phenomenon will be of a short duration. We must be able to manage our relations. The knowledge of this has been the guiding star during the past years, and this must be the case also in the future.

Translation: Aulis Nopsanen

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